UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

JUNE

TO : MR. TOLSON

DATE: 5/17/68

FROM : C. D. DeLoach

cc Mr. DeLoach
Mr. Sullivan
Mr. Gale
Mr. Bishop

SUBJECT: MARTIN LUTHER KING
(Previous request for electronic coverage by Robert F. Kennedy)
LEAK OF INFORMATION BY DEPARTMENT

Ed Weisl, Jr. came over to see me at 4:15 p.m., 5/17/68. He asked me if the rumor was true that was going around Washington to the effect that Bobby Kennedy had specifically asked the FBI to tap the telephone of Martin Luther King. I told Weisl I had not heard this rumor. I asked him what prompted his question. He replied that he had heard about this several times and, as a matter of fact, a statement had appeared in a recent newspaper article.

I reminded Weisl that Messrs. Gale, McAndrews, and I had briefed him regarding all activities pertaining to Bobby Kennedy's requests for microphones and telephone taps during his tenure as Attorney General. I stated this briefing, as he should recall, concerned the basis on which the Department pleaded immunity in the civil suit against our agents in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Weisl stated he remembered the briefing and, as a matter of fact, this was when the information first came to his attention. I asked Weisl why he was now asking me this specific question. He replied because Drew Pearson had found out about this matter and probably would print it in order to embarrass Bobby Kennedy.

I asked Weisl if he had discussed this matter with Drew Pearson. He replied in the affirmative and stated his father, Ed Weisl, Sr., had also discussed the matter with Pearson. Weisl asked me if the FBI would have any objections to this matter being brought out before the public. I told him it appeared as if the matter had already been brought out before the public. I stated he should keep several things in mind, i.e., (1) regardless of how such an article was written, a segment of the Negro population of the United States would still feel very harshly toward the FBI and (2) this would obviously cut off some of our sources of information.

Weisl rebutted this statement with the fact that Richard Harwood of the Washington Post had already printed the fact that

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the FBI had accumulated a number of tapes on King, as a result of the utilization of microphones. Weisl stated that Pearson would obviously indicate that Bobby Kennedy had ordered the FBI to take this action. I told Weisl that, nevertheless, certain Negro groups would still blame the FBI, whether we were ordered to take such action or not.

Weisl stated he would try to keep the above matter from being printed, if the FBI felt so strongly about it. I told him we held no brief for Kennedy, in view of the shoddy way in which he had treated the FBI; however, we did not want to be involved in any political maneuvers and action of this nature would most certainly concern politics. Weisl stated he would try to keep this from appearing.

Richard Harwood did include in his recent article on the Director a statement that the FBI had several tapes on Martin Luther King, as a result of the utilization of microphones. This fact has also appeared in a number of other newspapers. Apparently Weisl has discussed this matter with Pearson---Pearson desiring to print the facts in order to embarrass Kennedy.

The record is quite clear, through the medium of memoranda written by former employee Courtney Evans, that Kennedy first requested electronic coverage; however, Evans succeeded in talking him out of it. Several months later Evans approached Kennedy and requested permission for such coverage, at which time Kennedy approved this coverage. While an expose of such facts could obviously hurt Kennedy, such action would also harm the FBI from a public relations standpoint. We, therefore, should have no part in it and should discreetly discourage such action if brought to our attention.

ACTION -

If such an article is printed by Pearson, we should follow a strict "no comment" policy.

Right. D Good